

Defense Intelligence Agency seeks academic links

African scholars shun offer, rejecting "collaboration"

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A government intelligence-gathering agency, in a departure from its usual passion for secrecy, is seeking to establish a public link with an American university.

But its efforts to forge a connection have created a storm of protest among some university scholars, who fear they will be tarred with the brush of "government collaborator," and that their ability to undertake academic research will be compromised.

The Defense Intelligence Agency is seeking a connection with a university that has a department specializing in the study of African issues, politics, and people. The DIA wants to send its intelligence analysts to one of these African-studies centers (there are some 12 nationwide) to beef up its knowledge about the African continent. And, the Monitor has learned, the agency is offering half a million dollars to any institution that will cooperate.

But African experts have been nearly unanimous in their condemnation of the proposal. They argue that any such tie could jeopardize scholarly research on Africa. African government leaders are already suspicious about clandestine intelligence-gathering in their countries, these experts say. If they see overt links between American educational institutions and spy agencies, they may close their borders to US researchers. At least, that is the fear of many scholars, who have flatly rejected DIA's overtures.

A Monitor survey of African studies centers at major universities across the country shows that none would be willing to entertain links, formal or informal, with the DIA.

"Any linkage is a suspicious one," says one of the nation's leading specialists on Africa, who asked not to be identified. Adds Rita Breen, the executive officer of Harvard's Committee on African Studies: "Even the agency's overtures might compromise scholars, there is so much suspicion of US intelligence [agencies]."

The Defense Intelligence Agency, set up in 1961 to unify Defense Department intelligence efforts, would like to send a body of analysts to a prestigious African-studies center to learn a variety of languages and study certain key countries in depth.

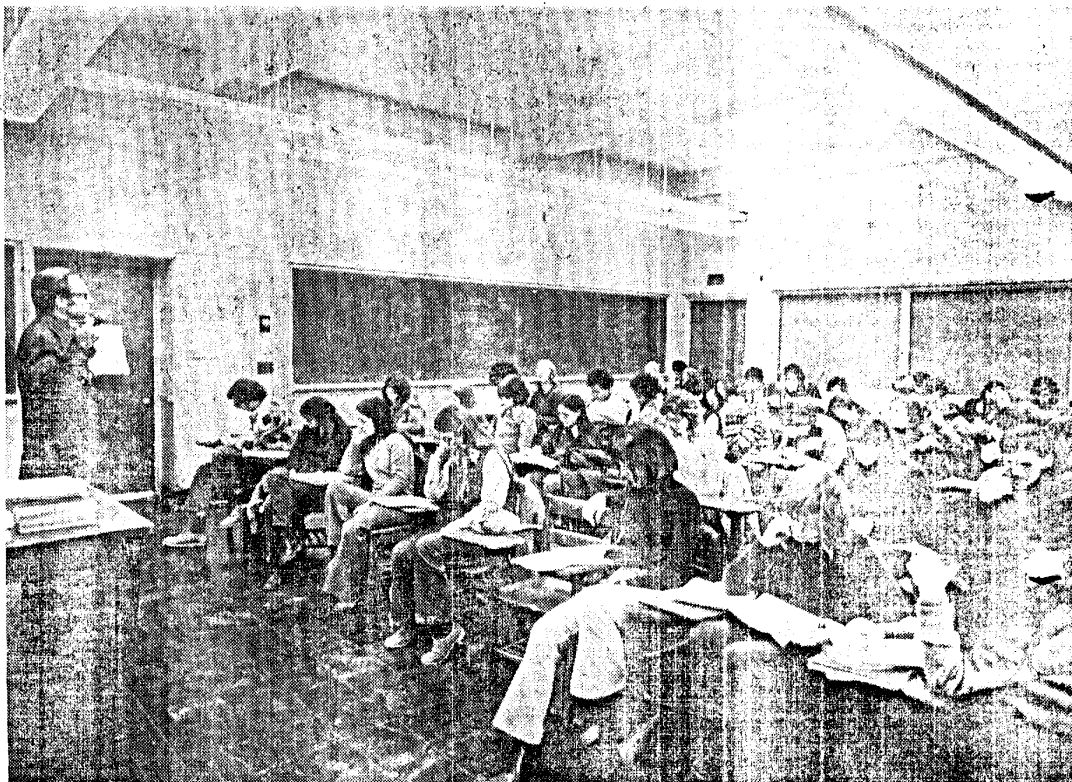
It is prepared to pay \$500,000 for the privilege in fiscal year 1982, according to Walter Longanecker, a special assistant for education and training at the DIA, who is attempting to interest universities in cooperating with the agency.

A source within the African Studies Program at Indiana University asserts that the agency is particularly interested in acquiring greater familiarity with three regions: southern Africa, the Horn of Africa, and oil-rich Nigeria.

Among the languages it would reportedly like its analysts to learn are Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia, and Hausa, which is spoken in northern Nigeria and other West African countries.

In an effort to interest Indiana University in the DIA proposal, Mr. Longanecker paid a visit to its African studies program in June. He reportedly emphasized that the kind of relationship the agency envisaged would be "not in the open, aboveboard," and would involve "no laundered money." (In the past, US intelligence agencies are alleged to have financed clandestine activities in foreign countries by funneling cash through foundations and other third parties, including research organizations.)

Longanecker concedes the agency's interest in sending analysts to Indiana to improve their knowledge of Africa and learn some of its languages. But in a telephone



By a staff photographer

Defense Department intelligence operatives would like to be part of the classroom scene, but Africa scholars say no

interview he denied that the DIA is seeking a "formal contract" with any African studies center. He claimed that it is simply "trying to interest scholars in making themselves available to provide on-call expertise."

Indiana's African Studies Program, one of the largest and best known in the country, spurns such notions, however. A spokesman declares that its faculty has unanimously and unequivocally rejected a relationship with the DIA.

Like its counterparts at other African studies centers in the US, the Indiana faculty members worry that their academic integrity would be gravely impaired by links with an intelligence agency.

"Even the appearance of such a relationship is very dangerous from an academic

Patrice Lumumba in 1960 and helped to overthrow Ghanaian strongman Kwame Nkrumah in 1966.

Moreover, some Africa specialists doubt they can trust the DIA. Agency analysts, while undertaking university courses, would almost certainly need to visit the African countries they were studying. While ostensibly conducting research, faculty members point out, these analysts might in fact be gathering intelligence.

Says a student at a leading African studies center: "It is a distinct — and, to me, frightening — possibility that what the DIA really wants is ready-made legitimacy or 'cover' for conducting covert information-gathering in Africa."

Longanecker terms suggestions that the DIA might abuse a relationship with a university as "totally ridiculous." Pronouncing such fears "unwarranted," he says, "We would work on the basis of mutual trust."

Although the DIA is something of a competitor for the CIA, it engages in little information collection of its own aside from "operating the overt system of military attaches working out of American embassies overseas," according to Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks in their book "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence."

Many Africa scholars argue that if any of their number should accept the DIA's offer, they will all be tainted. "We'll all be branded as intelligence agents," says one expert, noting that throughout the third world there is already a tendency to view visiting Americans, of whatever stripe, as CIA agents.

Another adds that "all American Africanists would suffer" if any African studies center should establish a tie with the DIA.

But a financially strapped center might consider the agency's offer attractive. According to an Africa scholar familiar with details of the proposal, the DIA is prepared to fund field research for faculty and add it is also prepared to underwrite the cost of language manuals. Moreover, Longanecker

asserts that all work performed by a center for the DIA will be unclassified and publishable. "It is tempting to scholars in very hungry universities," a source says.

But it has not tempted Michigan State University's African Studies Center. In a statement, its director, David Wiley, declared that the center "has no past or present relationship with any foreign or domestic intelligence agency, neither are we considering any relationship with, or acceptance of, funding from the DIA or any military or intelligence organization."

He says he believes, "having spoken with other African studies centers across the country, no single center in the nation has accepted any funds from, or relationship with, the DIA or any other intelligence organization."

The disinclination of African studies centers to cooperate with the DIA appears to have an ironic twist to it. Many Africanists in the United States believe that the Reagan administration, like others before it, views Africa chiefly in terms of East-West rivalry, ignoring the complex political, social, and economic conditions that prevail in its intensely varied countries.

Some feel, however, that the DIA may be seeking a more realistic view of the continent, one untrammelled by the traditional preoccupation with big-power penetration there. They suggest that the agency is attempting to ally itself with a major African studies center precisely because it seeks this expanded view of Africa.

Though the DIA may have real needs where Africa is concerned, its approach to African studies centers is seen by at least one respected US Africanist as extraordinarily naive. He suggests the agency does not have much experience of dealing with universities in an overt way.

Longanecker seems unaware of the violent criticism the DIA proposal has sparked. He says he found a "very positive attitude" among the half dozen African studies centers he has approached. "Universities feel a moral obligation to share their learning," he says. "That to me is a very good sign."

Some feel the DIA seeks a view of Africa untrammelled by the preoccupation with big-power penetration.

point of view," says a source, adding that "there is probably not an African studies program that will entertain such a proposal."

Centers contacted by the Monitor were unanimous in their concern that their ties and exchanges with African scholars and universities would suffer if they concluded a deal with the DIA.

"None of us would ever again be able to get a visa to an African country to conduct legitimate research," protests a student, who asked not to be identified.

Although the DIA is barely known in Africa, all American intelligence organizations are viewed with suspicion there. African Intelligence Agency officers plotted the assassination of Congolese Prime Minister